



# City of Santa Barbara California

## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

**REPORT DATE:** March 10, 2011  
**AGENDA DATE:** March 17, 2011  
**PROJECT:** Highway 101 Operational Improvements (Milpas to Hot Springs)  
 Salinas Ramps Amendment (MST2004-00701)  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Division, (805) 564-5470  
 Danny Kato, Senior Planner *DK*  
 Daniel Gullett, Associate Planner *DG*

### **I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project is to amend the approved Coastal Development Permit for the Highway 101 Operational Improvements Project (Milpas to Hot Springs), to widen Highway 101 to three lanes in the vicinity of the Salinas Street on/off-ramps. The revised project will require the reduction or elimination of previously improved landscaping in the median (between the northbound and southbound lanes) and the area adjacent to the new sound walls. The project also includes relocation of a portion of the sound wall near the end of the Salinas off ramp, removal of a portion of the wall adjacent to the Salinas on ramp, new guard railings, and enclosure of a portion of a drainage ditch in a box culvert.

### **II. REQUIRED APPLICATION**

The discretionary application required for this project is an amendment to an approved Coastal Development Permit (CDP2011-00003) to allow revisions to approved development in the Coastal Commission's Appealable Jurisdiction of the City's Coastal Zone (SBMC §28.44.060).

### **III. PROJECT SUMMARY**

The Planning Commission approved the Highway 101 Operational Improvements project in December 2004 (PC Resolution attached as Exhibit I). The project, which is currently under construction, includes structural changes within a two-mile section of the Highway 101 corridor between the Milpas and Hot Springs/Cabrillo interchanges with the objective of improved merging, circulation, and safety. As approved in 2004, the completed project would result in two northbound lanes and separate auxiliary lanes between the three interchanges (Hot Springs on-ramp to Salinas off-ramp, and Salinas on-ramp to Milpas off-ramp). The approved project was refined through extensive review by a Project Development Team, Design Review Team, Planning Commission, Architectural Board of Review, and Historic Landmarks Commission. The approved project includes a landscaped ten-foot wide median

with three-beam barriers on either side of the median for the segment between Sycamore Creek and the Hot Springs/Cabrillo interchange.

The Highway 101 HOV project, currently in project design and development, would widen Highway 101 to three lanes between the City of Carpinteria and Sycamore Creek (including the subject segment of highway). Caltrans expects construction of the HOV project to commence in 2014 with an anticipated completion date of 2020.

The subject proposal to widen the highway to three lanes at the Salinas ramps was prompted by the Montecito Association, who encouraged Caltrans to accelerate the construction of a third northbound lane through the Salinas interchange (see Exhibit C). In addition to providing congestion relief five to ten years sooner than the HOV project, Caltrans indicates that there would be several benefits to the project: new money available to help pay for construction of the revised project, project cost savings, and reduced construction impacts by incorporating the third lane in the current project. The highway would remain as a two-lane highway south of the Hot Springs on-ramp following the revised project, until such time that the HOV or other successor project is constructed.

Because the current proposal is designed to full Caltrans standards (lane width, shoulder widths and ramp geometry), without the acquisition of any additional right of way, the current proposal will result in a substantial reduction of area available for landscaping. According to the Caltrans District 5 Director, Caltrans has explored all options, and the current proposal is the best Caltrans can do either now or in the future for the following reasons: limited right of way availability; Caltrans District 5 staff's belief that design exceptions would not be approved for reduced shoulders to provide additional landscaping due to concerns about Caltrans maintenance worker safety; and Caltrans' anticipated inability to acquire additional right of way in the area due to constraints associated with the railroad property and lower income housing adjacent to the highway.

The current proposal reduces the median width of the approved project from 10 feet (barrier face to barrier face) to between 6 and 3.25 feet (barrier face to barrier face) for a distance of 2,284 feet. Excluding the widths of the barriers, the actual planting width would be as narrow as 2.67 feet, not accounting for further reduced width at the barrier support posts. The proposal reviewed by the Architectural Board of Review (the plans for the current proposal are different than the plans presented to the ABR) also included removal of approximately 1,135 feet of approved landscaping, including trees and shrubs along the soundwalls on either side of Salinas Street.

In review of the subject project, both the Design Review Team (consisting of members of the Architectural Board of Review, the Historic Landmarks Commission and the Planning Commission) and the full Architectural Board of Review indicated that the proposed landscaping was inconsistent with related City's policies and guidelines, and therefore not acceptable.

Caltrans responded to the Design Review Team and Architectural Board of Review by providing some additional planting along the new soundwall between Salinas Street and Sycamore Creek in addition to the vines previously proposed, and proposing providing additional landscaping in the Highway 101 median at a nearby location between Laguna Street and Chapala Street (see Exhibit D). Changes to the median plantings at that location would require appropriate design review approvals from the Architectural Board of Review and the Historic Landmarks Commission. Due to time constraints,

neither the Design Review Team nor the Architectural Board of Review has reviewed the current proposal.

Like the Design Review Team and the Architectural Board of Review, staff has had concerns regarding conformance of the current proposal with policies and guidelines related to landscaping. Staff supports the concept of widening Highway 101 to three lanes through the City consistent with 101 In Motion, and recognizes the constraints of the right of way at this location, and the benefits of the project, including cost savings and congestion relief 5-10 years sooner than anticipated with the HOV project. Because these conflicting goals are of similar importance and because Caltrans has slightly modified the landscaping since the Architectural Board of Review and Design Review Team reviews, staff will not be making a recommendation on the proposal. Should the Planning Commission choose to approve the current project, staff suggests findings and several recommended conditions to enhance the current project's compliance with various policies of the Local Coastal Plan, including water quality and biological resources in Exhibit A. If the Planning Commission chooses to deny the current proposal, findings for project denial are provided below.



Figure 1: Salinas Ramps and Vicinity

#### IV. BACKGROUND

In 1993, Caltrans proposed a project, which would have widened Highway 101 to three lanes in each direction between the Ventura County and Milpas Street. That project received substantial community opposition and was ultimately abandoned. As a result of community feedback on that project, City Council initiated an amendment to the City's Local Coastal Plan (LCP) to provide specific discussion

and policy guidance regarding future development of Highway 101 in the Coastal Zone. The LCP amendment was adopted by City Council and certified by the Coastal Commission in April 1994.

The 1994 LCP amendment included an implementation action to develop design guidelines for the highway corridor in the City's Coastal Zone. The *Highway 101 Santa Barbara Coastal Parkway Design Guidelines* were developed in 1994-1995 by a subcommittee of the Architectural Board of Review and Historic Landmarks Commission members with assistance from Caltrans staff, City Planning and Transportation staff, and members of the public. The Design Guidelines were adopted by City Council and certified by the Coastal Commission in April 1996.

During the same time period, the Santa Barbara Association of Governments (SBCAG) began a series of studies assessing options for relieving congestion in the corridor, including the *Highway 101 Alternatives Study* (1995) and *The South Coast Highway 101 Deficiency Plan* (2002). The Deficiency Plan proposed both long- and short-term strategies aimed at improving transportation along the corridor. In response to the Deficiency Plan findings, SBCAG and local cities adopted 34 short-term projects aimed at correcting operational deficiencies on Highway 101 and adjacent roads. The Operational Improvements project was designed to improve traffic congestion, ramp access, and safety concerns consistent with the direction of the 101 Deficiency Plan. The 101 Deficiency Plan concluded that its identified improvements did not address long-term freeway congestion, and that further action on a community-wide basis would be required to alleviate increases in traffic volumes and ensuing congestion along the corridor.

The Deficiency Plan required development of an implementation plan for the identified long-term projects. The implementation plan began in 2004 and was eventually known as *101 In Motion*. The goal of *101 In Motion* was to bring the communities together to agree on a long-term, 20-40 year, plan that addressed congestion along the 101 corridor. *101 In Motion* evaluated a wide range of improvement approaches and strategies, and involved staff participation from area cities, Santa Barbara County and the Metropolitan Transit District, along with local decision makers and members of the public. The consensus recommendation for implementation of *101 in Motion* process included a number of strategies, but the primary recommendation was "add a lane and a train" to address commuter and goods movement needs between the Ventura County line and the City of Santa Barbara. The SBCAG Board unanimously approved the *101 In Motion* consensus recommendation in October 2005. The Highway 101 HOV project, was programmed to implement the "add a lane" portion of the *101 In Motion's* primary recommendation for the highway segment between Sycamore Creek and the City of Carpinteria. The subject project would add a lane between the Hot Springs on ramp and Sycamore Creek.

SBCAG provided the Planning Commission with an annual update on the Operational Improvements project at the October 14, 2010 hearing and indicated that SBCAG and Caltrans were interested in pursuing the subject project with a Coastal Development Permit amendment and would need to obtain approvals for the change in a short timeframe to include the changes in the project. At that hearing, SBCAG stated that the pedestrian and bicycle tunnel adjacent to the Union Pacific railroad bridge, which was approved with the Operational Improvements project, was not feasible because Union Pacific would not agree to a tunnel adjacent to the existing bridge. SBCAG has indicated that they

intend to file a separate application to request a Coastal Development Permit amendment to remove the tunnel from the Operational Improvements project and provide an alternative facility beneath the bridge.

## **V. DESIGN REVIEW**

### **A. DESIGN REVIEW TEAM**

As mandated by the City's *Highway 101 Santa Barbara Coastal Parkway Design Guidelines*, a Design Review Team (DRT) composed of members of the Architectural Board of Review (Chris Gilliland, Chris Manson-Hing), Historic Landmarks Commission (Robert Adams, Alex Pujó, Phil Suding), and Planning Commission (Bruce Bartlett, Charmaine Jacobs, alternate Deborah Schwartz) was appointed to review the subject project. The DRT met three times. The first meeting was November 9, 2010. The second meeting was a site visit on November 17, 2010, and the final meeting was January 12, 2011. All DRT members indicated that the loss of median landscaping was unacceptable, and a median no narrower than the 10 foot wide median approved as part of the Highway 101 Operational Improvements project is necessary to support appropriate planting. Individual members also indicated concern regarding the loss of landscaping along the sound walls. The DRT consensus was that the short-term benefits of the third lane were not worth the long-term loss of landscaping, considering the pending Highway 101 HOV project, which would also add a lane and provide more time for Caltrans to pursue options to provide additional landscaping. Caltrans has since stated that design exceptions to provide additional landscaping are not available at this location and right-of-way acquisition is not feasible. The subject project has been refined since the DRT review to include some additional landscaping along the sound walls, which is reflected in the current proposal before the Planning Commission.

### **B. ARCHITECTURAL BOARD OF REVIEW**

The Architectural Board of Review (ABR) reviewed the subject project February 7, 2011. The ABR unanimously continued the project indefinitely, stating that the subject project, as presented to the ABR, was not consistent with the Design Guidelines direction for this segment of 101 to serve as a gateway into the City. ABR meeting minutes are included as Exhibit E. The project has been refined since the ABR review to include some additional landscaping along the sound walls on either side of the Salinas ramps, as reflected in the current proposal. Caltrans is also now proposing landscaping enhancements for a segment of Highway 101 median outside the project area between Chapala and Laguna Streets, as shown on Exhibit D.

## **VI. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Caltrans is the Lead Agency for environmental review of the project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City is a Responsible Agency under CEQA, and relies upon the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared by Caltrans for CEQA compliance. A Final EIR/Finding of No Significant Impact for the Operational Improvements (Milpas to Hot Springs) project was certified by Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration in March 2004. The Operational Improvements EIR analyzed a six-foot-wide median through the project. As a result of the



City review process following EIR Certification and prior to project approval, the project was refined to include a ten-foot-wide median between Sycamore Creek and the Hot Springs/Cabrillo Interchange. The City prepared an Addendum to the FEIR to document changes to the FEIR, including the added median width prior to City approval of the project in December 2004. (The FEIR and previous addendum have been provided to the Planning Commission under a separate cover)

Caltrans completed a CEQA Addendum to the EIR) to document the additional changes to the subject project (attached as Exhibit F). Staff concluded that the Addendum is adequate to complete CEQA review of the current project presented to the Planning Commission. The Caltrans Addendum states that the visual change resulting from the subject project is similar to the approved project and there are no additional impacts resulting from the reduced landscaping. Although the additional visual impacts have policy implications (as seen below), the visual analysis provided in the FEIR and Addendum for the subject project is adequate for the purposes of CEQA.

The original EIR identified wetland impacts from the project. The Addendum identifies an increase in the magnitude of the wetland impacts with this project due to the proposed enclosure of an 800 square foot concrete drainage ditch with a new culvert. The ditch is currently filled with sediment and contains aquatic plant species. The addendum includes a 1:1 mitigation to provide 800 square feet of planting on Sycamore Creek to mitigate the loss of wetland area. As presented in the submitted addendum, this mitigation would reduce the wetland impacts of the subject project to a less than significant level. The suggested conditions of approval in Exhibit A include a condition for wetlands mitigation where the location(s) for wetland mitigation would be confirmed through consultation and regulatory permitting processes of the California Department of Fish and Game and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Additionally, staff recommends a condition of approval that requires the project's drainage comply with the City's SWMP (see Policy/Guideline Consistency Section below) to ensure protection of water quality in other wetlands and waters of the U.S. affected by the project. The City's SWMP was not yet adopted at the time of the original project approval.

Should the Planning Commission approve the project, CEQA findings are required.

## **VII. POLICY/GUIDELINE CONSISTENCY**

To approve the project, the Planning Commission must find that the project is consistent with the policies of the Coastal Act, Local Coastal Plan, and all implementing guidelines, including the *Highway 101 Santa Barbara Coastal Parkway Design Guidelines*.

### **A. HIGHWAY 101 SANTA BARBARA COASTAL PARKWAY DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The *Highway 101 Santa Barbara Coastal Parkway Design Guidelines* were established to implement LCP Policy 9.8, which calls for design guidelines to guide development of the Highway 101 Corridor. The document is available on the City's website at <http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Resident/Home/Guidelines>

The stated purpose of the Design Guidelines is to preserve the historic character and visual quality of the segment of Highway 101 within the City's Coastal Zone. Their intent is to serve

as a guide to those who are designing improvements to the highway and to the decision makers who must make the necessary findings for their design-related decisions. The Guidelines state that the coastal segment of Highway 101 provides a distinctive visual gateway to the City with its lush, established landscaping, unobstructed views of the mountains and ocean and its unique highway structures. The Guidelines also state the following with regard to future improvements to the Highway 101 and conflicting policies:

*The design guidelines set forth in this document are not meant to discourage needed changes in the Highway 101 corridor; rather they are intended to serve as a guide to those who are designing improvements to the highway and the decision makers who must make the necessary findings for their design-related decisions. It is recognized that Caltrans' primary obligation is operating the highway in a safe and efficient manner and that there may be situations where state and federal policies conflict with the City's design guidelines.*

The Guidelines are divided into three separate sections: grading, landscaping, and structures. At issue with the subject project are various guidelines related to the provision of highway landscaping.

The General Landscaping Guidelines include the following:

- *The primary goals of landscaping are to soften the appearance of structures, to screen undesirable views and to screen and enhance the view of the highway from the City and the City from the Highway.*
- *If landscaping changes are made, revegetation which, where feasible, fully mitigates the visual impact created by removal of existing vegetation area shall be provided. Accomplishing this may require acquisition of land. When landscaping is removed, sufficient shoulder area should be provided to allow placement of a similar type of replacement landscaping.*
- *When considering new landscaping, significant existing landscaping shall be identified by the applicant in the landscape plan and, if possible, preserved.*

The Plant Selection Guidelines include the following:

- *An important factor in reducing the scale of structures and the roadway is the use of tall trees.*
- *Significant trees proposed for removal should be identified on the landscape plan for consideration by the appropriate City design review board. Significant trees that are removed should be replaced in kind if possible.*

The landscaping guidelines addressing median treatments include the following:

- *Median landscaping is fundamental to the appearance of a parkway. When median planting is small, the opposite travel lane becomes conspicuous. In the Crosstown Freeway area, there is just a ribbon of plant material which softens the look of the roadway but does not screen the opposite lane. Pronounced vegetation in the median is*

*very important and medians should be wide enough to accommodate it. Minimum median width should be similar to what exists near the Bird Refuge and throughout Montecito (approximately 10 feet of planting area).*

- It is desirable to allow median landscaping to balloon over the median planters. Since this can only occur when the shoulders are wide enough to allow cars to use the shoulder area in an emergency, the width of the median is important.*
- Median landscaping substantial enough to screen opposing traffic is encouraged....*

The Design Review Team (DRT) and Architectural Board of Review (ABR) did not believe that the project that they reviewed (less landscaping at the sound wall near the Salinas on-ramp and no enhanced median landscaping in the Laguna to Chapala segment of Highway 101) was consistent with this guidance. The DRT and ABR did not consider the visual effect reduced landscaping area proposed in the further-constrained median and adjacent to the outside shoulder to be substantially similar to the landscaping provided in the approved planting plan, and were concerned that the reduced median planting widths in the narrowest median sections would not appropriately screen the opposite travel lane consistent with the guidelines. However, Caltrans has indicated that design exceptions, such as reduced shoulder widths to provide additional area for landscaping in the existing right of way, are not available for this project and would not be available for a future project at this location, and that right-of-way acquisition is not feasible either now or in the future due to constraints on this segment of highway. If this is the case, any future third lane proposed through the Salinas ramps would result in similar reductions in landscaping.

#### **B. COASTAL ACT, LOCAL COASTAL PLAN & GENERAL PLAN POLICIES**

Below are selected relevant policies and guidelines related to aesthetics, coastal access, and water quality follow. The DRT and ABR stated that the proposals they reviewed were not compatible with policies related to aesthetics that are included below. Coastal access policies and discussion are included below due to consideration of a new pedestrian access across the highway in this segment. Policies regarding water quality are included below since the subject project does not yet include post-construction storm water management consistent with the City's standards. A complete list of relevant policies is provided in Exhibit G. Staff believes that the project is consistent with the remainder of the policies required for review of a Coastal Development Permit included in Exhibit G. The Pedestrian Master Plan was adopted in July 2006, after the approval of the original project. The Pedestrian Master Plan provides guidance to staff and decision makers, however a finding of consistency with the Pedestrian Master Plan is not required for approval of a Coastal Development Permit.

##### ***Aesthetics***

The General Plan Map and Open Space Element classify the Highway 101 corridor as Open Space. It states that freeway is classified as an open space because, *in addition to its being indeed open and of such scale as to be significant, it must be developed in a manner that will qualify it as open space in order that the adverse impact of the traffic through the corridor of the community will be minimized.*



The Open Space Element continues its discussion of highway landscaping stating:

*A fully landscaped freeway is vital to expressing the character of Santa Barbara on the freeway passing through it. There would be nothing so foreign to the quality of this community than to create a barren freeway that results from the addition of lanes of traffic either on the outside or in the median strip, the elimination of all landscaping, and the construction of a chain link and cable restraining fence to separate opposing traffic.*

The General Plan Map also indicates a buffer along the north side of the Highway 101 right-of-way at this location. The Local Coastal Plan defines the purpose of the buffer as to "signify the need for a separation between potentially conflicting uses or an area of transition between land uses not directly compatible."

The City's Local Coastal Plan also includes a map cataloguing the visual quality of certain viewpoints in the City's Coastal Zone, including on Highway 101 at Salinas Ramps (see Exhibit H). The map identifies a desirable foreground view at this location due to the freeway landscaping. The Local Coastal Plan states: *The vast amount of landscaping and the human-scale character of the highway's bridges, walls, and interchanges set highway 101 apart from other urban highways in Southern California and convey an immediate first impression to visitors and residents alike that Santa Barbara is unique. The Local Coastal Plan goes on to say: critical to maintaining the character of this outstanding community gateway is the preservation of established mature landscaping as well as skyline trees.*

**Coastal Act Section 30251** *The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by local government shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.*

**LCP Policy 9.8.** *The City shall seek to preserve the unique scenic and aesthetic quality of Highway 101.*

**LCP Policy 9.11.** *Improvements proposed for Highway 101 shall minimize the removal of existing landscaping and particularly specimen and/or skyline trees. Where the City finds that vegetation removal is unavoidable, cannot be prevented, and is in the best public interest, replacement plant material shall be incorporated into the project design so as to achieve wherever feasible comparable or better landscape screening in a timely manner.*

**LCP Policy 9.12.** *When improvements are proposed to Highway 101 in the Coastal Zone that will result in plant removal, the applicant shall submit a landscape plan prepared by a licensed landscape architect which is consistent with Architectural Board of Review requirements.*

*Landscape plans shall be consistent with Architectural Board of Review guidelines and shall be reviewed and approved by the Architectural Board of Review prior to issuance of a Coastal Development Permit. Conformance with the approved landscape plan shall be a condition of Coastal Development Permit approval.*

**LCP Policy 9.13.** *Landscaping shall be used to improve areas where views are currently degraded (e.g., Castillo Street interchange to Hot Springs/Cabrillo interchange).*

**LCP Policy 9.14.** *New highway projects which require Coastal Development Permits within the Highway 101 right-of-way between Castillo Street and Hot Springs/Cabrillo interchanges shall provide additional landscaping to create a lush appearance similar to the existing Olive Mill Road to Hot Springs/Cabrillo segment.*

The LCP also includes Policy 9.3, which states: *All new development in the coastal zone shall provide underground utilities and the undergrounding of existing overhead utilities shall be considered high priority.* The approved project includes a condition stating that all overhead utilities be undergrounded. The subject project includes existing overhead utilities between Sycamore Creek and Salinas Street, which have not yet been undergrounded but are subject to the undergrounding condition of the approved project. Staff understands that Caltrans has had difficulty acquiring consent from Union Pacific to underground across the railroad right-of-way, but the condition remains effective and Caltrans is required to underground the utilities at this location unless granted permission by the City through a new condition or substantial conformance determination to allow the utilities to remain.

#### ***Coastal Access – New Pedestrian Crossing***

**Coastal Act Section 30252** *The location and amount of new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by (1) facilitating the provision or extension of transit service, (2) providing commercial facilities within or adjoining residential development or in other areas that will minimize the use of coastal access roads, (3) providing non-automobile circulation within the development, (4) providing adequate parking facilities or providing substitute means of serving the development with public transportation, (5) assuring the potential for public transit for high intensity uses such as high-rise office buildings, and by (6) assuring that the recreational needs of new residents will not overload nearby coastal recreation areas by correlating the amount of development with local park acquisition and development plans with the provision of onsite recreational facilities to serve the new development.*

**LCP Policy 3.14.** *All improvements to Highway 101 shall be designed to provide as appropriate benefits (such as improved public access across and along the highway corridor to the waterfront, beach, and other recreation areas) and limit negative impacts (such as increased visibility of the freeway structure, increased noise or glare, or restricted access) to nearby recreational facilities within the Coastal Zone (e.g., Municipal Tennis Courts, the Child's Estate (Santa Barbara Zoo), Andree Clark Bird Refuge, beaches, harbor, waterfront area).*

**LCP Policy 11.16.** *In order to encourage walking as an alternative to travel by automobile, the City shall protect existing pedestrian access to coastal areas from areas north of Highway 101 and strongly encourage the development of new pedestrian accessways.*

**LCP Policy 11.18.** *Where feasible, proposed improvements to Highway 101 shall include provisions for functional pedestrian access. The location of pedestrian access should be carefully considered in order to provide a functional, accessible, and comfortable path of travel. Sidewalks and walkways shall be wide enough to comfortably accommodate at least two persons walking side-by-side (a minimum of 4 feet), shall include shade and resting areas, and shall provide adequate protection from nearby automobile and bicycle traffic. Provision of new pedestrian access in the area of Milpas Street from Santa Barbara's East Side to East Beach and the Santa Barbara Zoo shall be the highest priority.*

**Circulation Element Implementation Strategy 9.1.2** *Increase pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access from the Westside, Eastside, and Downtown through such methods as... creating access to the Waterfront from both a Cacique Street under-crossing at Highway 101 and a Voluntario Street pedestrian overcrossing at Highway 101...*

**Pedestrian Master Plan Policy 1.4.** *The City shall work to eliminate Highway 101 as a barrier to pedestrian travel.*

**Pedestrian Master Plan Strategy 1.4.1.** *Identify opportunities to improve or add pedestrian crossings of Highway 101. [The Pedestrian Master Plan includes a discussion and graphic of a pedestrian overcrossing to the zoo as implementation of this strategy, which is included in Exhibit G]*

**Pedestrian Master Plan Strategy 1.4.2.** *Work with Caltrans to implement the projects identified in the Pedestrian Master Plan that enhance pedestrian safety and connectivity across the Highway 101 corridor and other State Highways*

The current General Plan Map includes an icon showing a pedestrian grade separation in the vicinity of Sycamore Creek. An icon for a pedestrian grade separation at this location has been on the General Plan Map since 1964.

Since the subject project would result in a long-term condition and buildout of existing Highway 101 right-of-way, the policy direction to provide pedestrian access across Highway 101 at this location is especially relevant. Due to the time constraints associated with the subject project, new pedestrian access is not being provided as part of the project description. Staff has been in discussions with Caltrans and SBCAG regarding new pedestrian access, and both Caltrans and SBCAG have indicated that they are supportive of a future project to provide pedestrian access across Highway 101 and that the current project would not preclude access described in these policies. As indicated in the attached letter (Exhibit J), SBCAG has committed to seeking funding for a feasibility study to provide pedestrian access in Sycamore Creek vicinity.

***Water Quality***

**Coastal Act Section 30231** *The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored through, among other means, minimizing adverse effects of waste water discharges and entrainment, controlling runoff, preventing depletion of ground water supplies and substantial interference with surface waterflow, encouraging waste water reclamation, maintaining natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats, and minimizing alteration of natural streams.*

**Coastal Act Section 30240 (a)** *Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas.*

**(b)** *Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts, which would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas.*

**LCP Policy 6.8** *The riparian resources, biological productivity, and water quality of the City's coastal zone creeks shall be maintained, preserved, enhanced, and, where feasible, restored.*

**LCP Policy 6.11-B** *New highway structures shall be designed to protect stream and creek environments from non-point pollutants (such as oil and rubber residues from the road surface) and from accidental spills of toxic materials.*

**LCP Policy 6.14** *Development adjacent to the Andree Clark Bird Refuge shall be designed and constructed in such a manner as to be compatible in terms of building location, character and intensity. Furthermore, new development in this area shall protect, and, where feasible, enhance the sensitive habitat of the Andree Clark Bird Refuge, specifically addressing issues of drainage, traffic, noise and aesthetics.*

The project site drains into the Andree Clark Bird Refuge and is adjacent to Sycamore Creek. The project is not currently proposing to comply with the City's Storm Water Management Program (SWMP), and is proposing increased impervious area. The City's SWMP was formally implemented in January 2009. Pursuant to the terms of Caltrans' Federal Clean Water Act permit, Caltrans is required to comply with the City's Storm Water Management Program, which requires retention and treatment of runoff from the project. Staff has proposed a condition of approval for the current project that requires compliance with the City's SWMP. With compliance with the City's SWMP, the project would be consistent with these water quality policies.

### **VIII. FINDINGS**

The subject project would provide congestion relief five to ten years sooner than the next programmed project at this location and would provide cost savings and reduce construction impacts by incorporating the third lane into a current project. However, as expressed above, there are concerns regarding consistency with aesthetic guidelines and policies.

If the Planning Commission finds the current project consistent with the Local Coastal Program and chooses to approve the project, approval findings and conditions are provided in Exhibit A.

If the Planning Commission chooses to deny the project, staff suggests making the following finding: The project presented to the Planning Commission on March 17, 2011 is not consistent with applicable aesthetic policies and guidelines related to highway landscaping within the Coastal Zone included in Section VII of the Staff Report dated March 10, 2011.

#### **Exhibits:**

- A. Approval Findings and Conditions
- B. Letter from Caltrans dated March 7, 2011
- C. Letter from Montecito Association dated February 24, 2011
- D. Off-site area for enhanced landscaping
- E. ABR Minutes of February 7, 2011 (excerpt)
- F. Caltrans EIR Addendum dated February 23, 2011
- G. Applicable Policies
- H. Local Coastal Plan Visual Resources Map
- I. Planning Commission Resolution #059-04
- J. Letter from SBCAG dated March 4, 2011 and letter from Caltrans dated February 28, 2011